

Acquisition Research Community of Practice

Communities of Practice/Interest: Role in Keeping Abreast of Change

by Richard Donnelly
George Washington University

Defense Acquisition University
3 April 2003

Keeping Abreast of Change

Keeping abreast is a critical concern.

Failure to keep abreast can lead to organizational demise and policy obsolescence.

No systematic research on the role of COP/I in keeping abreast exists today.

How are COP/I used in keeping abreast of change (e.g., rapid technological change)?

COP/I within the Organization . . .

Groups that share meaning and sense-making about the “know-how” aspect of a particular subject (*Brown & Duguid, '98*). A key means of:

- 1) Accumulating individual knowledge into something larger for the organization.
- 2) “Warranting” information as worthwhile and useful for the organization.
- 3) Reducing equivocality, so group can move information quickly without loss of . . .

COP/I Maturity Levels

Ad hoc: implicit, develop reactively & temporarily, resources borrowed and sporadic.

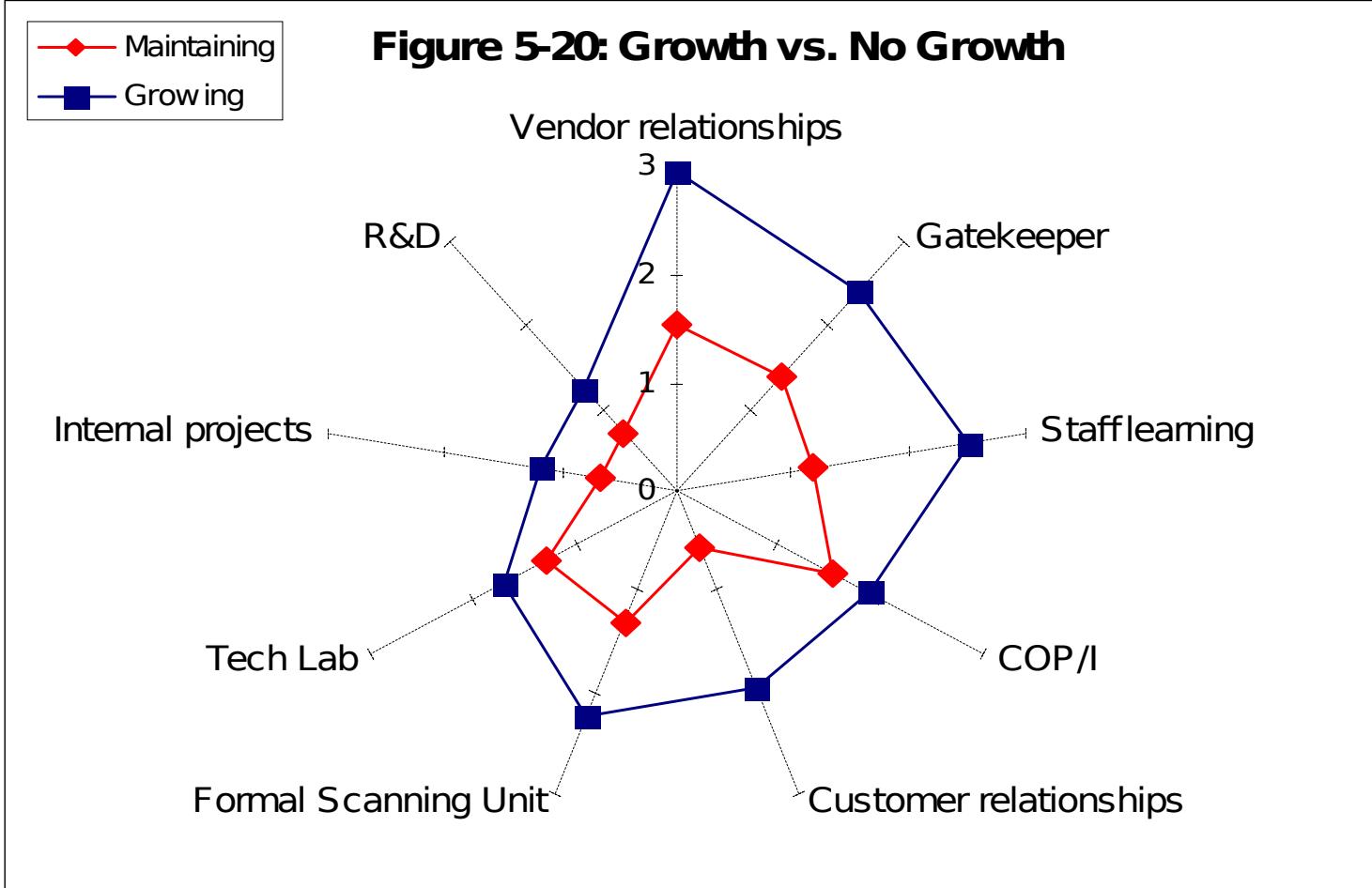
Basic: meet regularly, acknowledged roles, expected outcomes, resources=time of members.

Structured: expected to “warrant” information as useful, resources for communication/coordination.

Integrated: formal part of KM system, planning process, develops competency models.

Donnelly & Durney, c.
2000-2002

Key Role of COP/I in Keeping Abreast



Use of COP/I in Keeping Abreast

	Gov	Int	Ext
<i>Sample size:</i>	(8)	(9)	(7)
Ad hoc (1)	4	6	5
Basic (2)	2	1	2
Structured (3)	--	1	3
Integrated (4)	--	--	3
Avg	1.33	1.38	2.46

Study sample (ISSPs)

- Types of organization:
 - 8 Government
 - 9 Internal Units
 - 7 External/Customer Focus
- 38 interviewees included:
 - 14 CIOs or direct reports
 - 11 CEOs or Division Directors
 - 6 CTOs or Center Directors
 - 7 Chief Scientists or Chief Architects

Extension to Acquisition Research

- What AR-COP maturity level should we target? What level is realistic?
- What is our key purpose: 1) knowledge stewardship, 2) innovation, 3) helping, or 4) best practices?
- How do we complement, rather than reinvent what has already been done?
- Are there existing user or contractor COPs we should collaborate with?

Possible alternatives for an AR-COP

- **Research-side perspective:** Create model of field of AR, identify work done, current gaps, emerging needs for research.
- **End-user perspective:** Review acquisition practices, key problem areas, likely upcoming changes and new problems.
- **Contractor perspective:** Identify current policy supports and challenges, expected changes, innovative approaches to policy-making.
- **Problem-solving:** Identify a few problems in need of solving, apply DAU & partners' special skills and insights.